

B¹ 28. (New) A method of preparing a flexible solid intumescent fire barrier material as defined in claim 27, wherein the binder is rubber and the resulting fire barrier material has a softness value from about 0.49 to about 1.45 mm.

29. (New) A method of preparing a flexible solid intumescent fire barrier material as defined in claim 27, wherein the resulting fire barrier material has an expansion ratio at least 2.5 times greater than the same composition would have if processed under high shear conditions with volatiles present.

30. (New) A method of preparing a flexible solid intumescent fire barrier material, comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing, in a substantially volatile free state, a mixture consisting essentially of water-insoluble intumescent mineral granules, halogen-free organic binder, and phosphorus containing flame retardant; and
- (b) mixing the mixture at high shear conditions;

wherein the resulting fire barrier material has a softness value from about 0.01 to about 3.75 mm.

Please amend the following claims:

B² 17. (Amended) A method of preparing a flexible solid intumescent fire barrier material as defined in claim 27, wherein said binder is selected from the group consisting of a thermoplastic and a thermosetting polymeric material.

B³ 19. (Amended) A method of preparing a flexible solid intumescent fire barrier material as defined in claim 27, wherein said binder is selected from the group consisting of ethylene vinyl acetate copolymer, a synthetic or natural rubber, and mixtures thereof.